GRUMMAN
Picnic supplement
plane news
July 26, 1971

No rain, lots of kids help make Family Picnic festive affair

For those driving toward Calverton in the morning of July 17 there was a real question of whether the annual picnic would take place for the skies opened. For a time, everything seemed to be one heavy and never-ending sheet of rain. But the faucet in the sky was turned off before 8 a.m.; and Calverton itself escaped a drenching. "Just a few drops," was the report of those at the picnic site before the gates swung open. And so it was later.

In they came, people from all over the Island, either Grummanites or their guests. They carried folding tables, grilles, blankets, baseball and football equipment, thermos jugs, bassinets, baby carriages, musical instruments—and even a near-council-size tent.

And as Gus D'Errico, who heads the Employee Services Office, said (among others), "There were more kids here than I've even seen at a picnic." Attendance over-all was estimated at 25-27,000, roughly 50 to 60 percent children.

The action started long before flag-raising time at 10 a.m., presided over by President Bill Zarkowsky of Grumman Aerospace, with an assist from D'Errico. Officially, that signaled the start of a long, active, swinging day. The unofficial day had begun, though, as the crowd came pouring into the tree-covered picnic site.

Going full-tilt were the merry-go-round, the octopus, and the swings, with ready takers at each; in fact, the swings may still be swinging, out of habit.

Especially for the children was that annually allotted block of time, more than an hour, when humorous and daredevil acts were in the spotlight. There was Buttons the Clown. Then Jay Green with a wide repertoire of juggling feats, and fancy pedaling on a unicycle. Connye Shears performed as a contortionist supreme. Magic acts by Delarge and Marge kept the kids entranced. Then the show-stopper: Hart Sells, a male-female team that did the incredible. Working within a large vertically-oriented wheel that by pedaling brough the wheel higher and higher (to a maximum height of 75 feet), the brawny pedaler brought himself and his female companion to sufficient height for her to do acrobatics.

That was just one part of the day, though. There were mini-train rides. (One, the Bethpage Calverton Flyer, got derailed once but soon got back on track.) Dance music was provided from 10:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. and from 2:15 p.m. to the closing hour of 4:45 p.m. by the orchestra under the direction of Al Kordula and Matt Daniels.

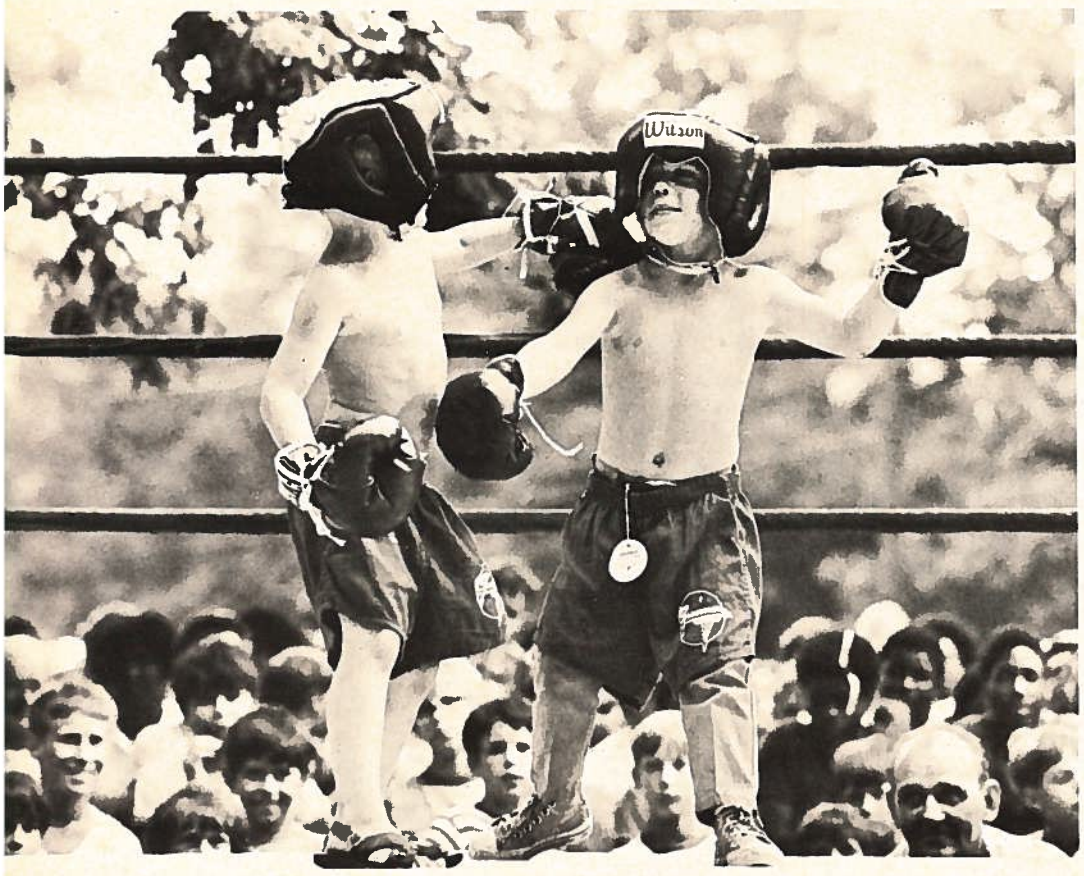
There were the typical rash of races—30-, 40-, and 50-yard dashes, potato sack, wheelbarrow, shoe, and three-legged races. And there was a softball throwing contest . . . and an egg throwing contest. And the famed (and frequently funny) Jr. Boxing events.

In the center of action, as usual, was a crew of Grumman nurses patching up the cuts and bruises that seem a natural consequence of a free-wheeling and wide-ranging picnic atmosphere. Also, the staples: ice cream, soda, hot dogs, and beer. If anyone hungered or thirsted, it was his (or her) own fault.

To provide help and direction whenever needed, there was a full complement of Grumman guards. And plenty of Facilities men were on hand to keep the rides in good shape. They, like the fire marshalls who were on constant tour of the area, came in early and stayed until after the last picnicker left.

As an added attraction—as though anything else was really required—beginning at 2:30 p.m. there were 135 prizes announced over the public address system. (Top winner, Mary Freeman of Plant 40.)

It was a satisfying experience to everyone, and especially to the kids. And even as mom and pop trudged back to their cars carrying all the paraphernalia of "a day in the country," would you believe? Yep. The kids were still running around as human perpetual-motion machines.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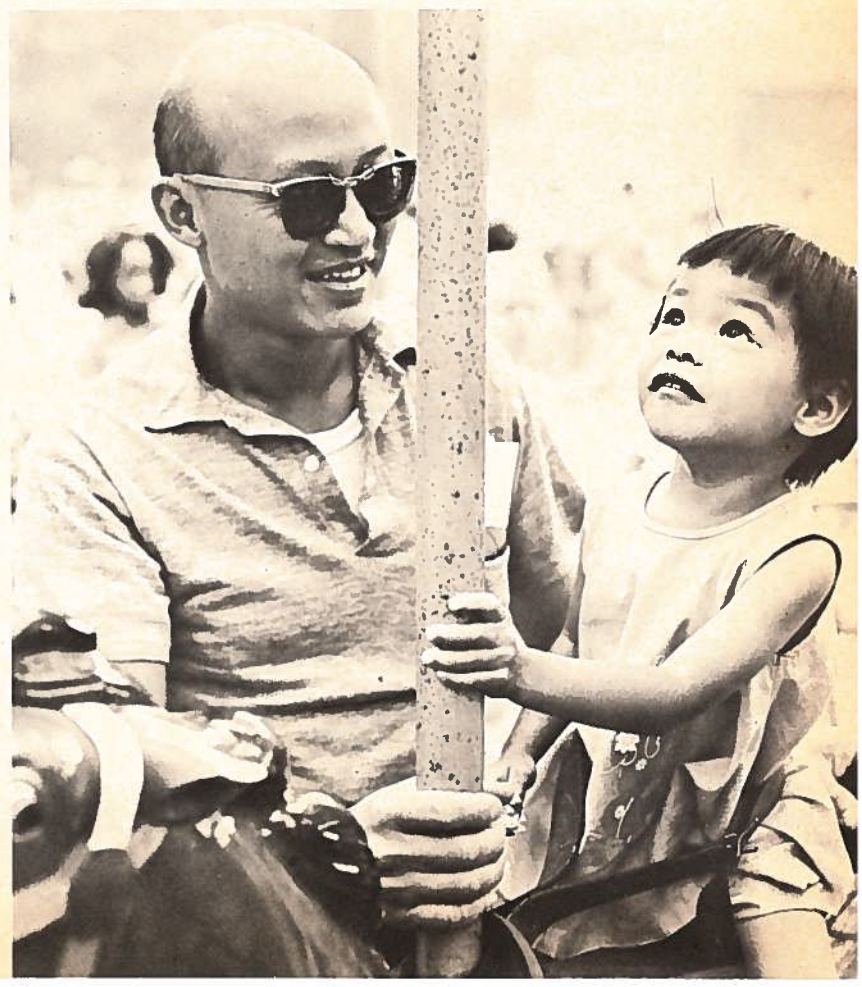

Picnic photos by Dick Sander and Gerry Costello